

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local inpatient mental health crisis beds and substance abuse inpatient treatment is available to all children in need.
2. All Children will be free of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual abuse.
3. Affordable quality childcare is available to all children.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county.

Health - Children's (0 - 19)

physical and mental well-being in the county.

Need for Comprehensive Mental Health System

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Aggressively seek community resources to support plans for child/adolescent psychiatric/inpatient facility through local hospitals.
- Form committee to assess needs and formulate plan for implementation for inpatient mental health system to serve children.

Need for Comprehensive Substance Abuse System

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Aggressively seek community resources to support plans for child/adolescent inpatient/residential substance abuse system
- Form a committee to assess needs and formulate plan for implementation for inpatient/residential substance abuse system to serve children

Youth at Risk Behaviors

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Support State Incentive Grant to Manage Comprehensive Prevention Planning Efforts
- Letter of support for increased prevention funding from Children's Policy Council to appropriate state agencies
- Work with Parenting and Early Care and Education Committees to develop prevention programs to address these needs

Safety - Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Children should be free of domestic violence/child abuse/sexual abuse

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Advocate for supervised visitation center
- Recommend legislation to redefine domestic violence when parties are siblings or parent/child conflict
- Advocate for out-patient accessible affordable treatment for juvenile sex offenders
- Advocate for respite care for adolescents
- Recommend establishment of sex crime investigation unit

Children will be free of substance abuse

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Hold parents accountable for securing prescription drugs and alcohol
- Recommend legislative changes to "Open House Party" law (making prosecution easier).
- Recommend education for prevention of "meth" abuse.

Children should have access to appropriate affordable after-school enrichment programs

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Increase public awareness for the need for quality after-school programs
- Seek grants for innovative after-school programs

There needs to be continuing education for all children's agencies in safety issues of substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual abuse.

Policy Council Action Steps:

- CPC to form a subcommittee to plan monthly cross-agency continuing education and training on safety related issues

Education - Children

learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Enhancing Non-Traditional Education

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Increase community awareness of availability of such programs
- Reintroduce programs such as Vocational Ed: Improve Existing GED and Drop Out Recovery Programs
- Encourage legislators to direct funds to adequately support these programs

Changing Attitudes about Public Education

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Develop and implement a public awareness campaign that reveals consequences of inadequately funding public education (i.e. costs for jails, prison, law enforcement, community safety, welfare tax burdens)
- Develop a long-range plan for funding public education that ties objectives to needed resources
- Target groups without children in public education

Increasing School Safety

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Identify and intervene with at risk students
- Encourage schools to aggressively monitor absenteeism to include attendance follow-up and truancy prevention
- Training teachers and staff in appropriate conflict-resolution strategies and alternatives to suspension
- Implement procedures to deal with internal and external crisis such as school wide assault and possible terrorism attacks

Early Care and

Education - Children

(0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Raise the awareness of the importance of early child development

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Participate in United Way "Born Learning" program; provide web links to network with other agencies and support the efforts of AL Partnership for children to highlight the importance of early care and education
- Continue and expand parenting kits to include web-based resources
- Raise the awareness of the need for developmental screening of all kids by age 3.
- Continue activities which encourage parents and child care providers to be advocates for early development (e.g. "Stand for Children," "Week of Young Child," Head Start activities, HIPPY (Home Instruction Pre-School Program for Youth

All children are actively learning in all developmental areas and will be prepared to succeed in school

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Increase availability and awareness of parenting education, which addresses all areas of child development
- Increase child care provider awareness and availability of training opportunities and resources
- Increase the number of Early Care Education (ECE) teachers who have Child Development
- Associate (CDA) credentials, 2 or 4 year degrees.

Increase the availability of affordable quality child care

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Form alliance with business community to assist in providing funds to supplement child care cost.
- Advocate the increased funding, including child care subsidies, for affordable, accessible, appropriate quality child care to include wraparound care
- Advocate for increased funding of child care resource and referral services to assist families in locating quality child care and maintaining child care related data
- Advocate for nationally accredited child care centers and homes

Increase outreach to children with special health care needs, disabilities, and diverse populations

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Increase awareness of training opportunities, resources, and support network for caregivers.
- Identify diverse populations and their special needs

Economic Security

- Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Provide resources to parents of young children to help them find and keep jobs

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Increase availability of literacy and GED programs
- Increase access to job skill training
- Advocate for transportation infrastructure
- Advocate for affordable childcare

Increase child support payments

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Educate single parent on the process for establishing paternity
- Ensure service providers (i.e. hospital paternity programs) understand the process of establishing paternity
- Provide adequate funding for collection of child support payments

Family Financial Planning

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Identify and promote existing resources to organizations serving young adults
- Develop outreach to young adults that informs them of financial planning resources

Parent Involvement and Skills

- Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Parents don't access services because of transportation, childcare, knowledge of resources, lack of interest, and busy schedule

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Compile parenting resource list
- Provide list at beginning of school year for all public school children K-6

Many parents do not understand and accept the responsibility of parenthood due to age and /or maturity

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Parent enrichment programs in schools
- Survey parents for needs
- Develop and distribute parenting resource list

Service providers need to acknowledge and build on the existing strengths of each family recognizing the complexity of parenting

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Develop a parenting advisory group
- Survey parents for needs

Policy Recommendation

1. Legislation needed to provide state funding for children's services.
2. Increase funding for mental health services for children, redirect existing funds.
3. Increase Medicaid match (i.e. Department of Youth Services setup Group Home locally).
4. All legislation should carry a "child impact statement."
5. Funding should be made available for affordable child-care for all children. Increase funding for children with special needs (disabilities).
6. Health Department, Department of Human Resources, Department of Children's Affairs, Department of Rehabilitation Services and other children's agencies collaborate to create and implement a system of developmental screening of all children by age 3.
7. Department of Education use PSA to advertise available GED and family literacy sites.
8. List of resources of all agencies specific to all children should be available to all-support data base of Department of Children Affairs.
9. Legislation is needed to clarify age definitions of child, minor, adult.

Additional Montgomery County Children's Policy Council Members:

Rebecca Smith	Joanne Shum	Deborah Gamble	Richard Engle	Wanda Williams
Eric Guttensohn	Monica Hendricks	Marjorie Baker	Melody Jones	Henry Parker
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Sandy Powell	Harry Lawson	Angela Gibson	Michael Thurman	
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